the tosspot

Quarterly Newsletter for the Barony of Unser Hafen

Kingdom of the Outlands

March 2010, Issue 319

Notes from the Chronicler—

This is the ***second quarterly issue*** of the Unser Hafen Tosspot! Your comments and ideas are always welcome. The Tosspot will be published in December, March, June, and September and contain articles, interviews, information on different SCA activities and news about the Barony of Unser Hafen.

For dynamic, up-to-date information, be sure to check the Unser Hafen Website.

If you are interested in seeing an article published on a particular topic, or would like to contribute content to the Baronial Newsletter, please contact the Chronicler via email at ellaanne@gmail.com or by phone at 970-482-1586, no calls after 8 pm please.

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This is the **March Quarterly 2010**, issue of the Tosspot, a publication of the Barony of Unser Hafen of the Society for Creative Anachronism, Inc. (SCA, Inc.). It is not a corporate publication of SCA, Inc., and does not delineate SCA, Inc. policies. The Tosspot is available in print when requested, at cost, from Paula Brobst, PO Box 509, LaPorte, CO 80535. Email address: ellaanne@gmail.com. Submission deadline is the 20th of December, March, June, and September.

Ten Things to Try for a More Medieval Feast

Mistress Agnes de Lanvallei

Any event that lasts more than four hours has to consider providing food for people. Since the Society for Creative Anachronism is about the arts and sciences of the Middle Ages, of course we developed "the feast", an attempt at re-creating the medieval dining experience. Although this article discusses ways in which to make a feast more medieval, our standard feast already incorporates medieval elements that make it distinct from a modern banquet.

Goals of the Feast

Before considering ways to make feast more medieval, one must define the goals for the meal. These are 1) serve good food, 2) serve large enough quantities of food to leave diners satisfied, and 3) price the meal at a cost that is reasonable to both host and guests. Furthermore, the feast should 4) require a reasonable, rather than excessive, effort to prepare it, and finally 5) create a medieval experience. Those goals are presented in order of their importance.

I am not going to discuss the first four but the fifth will not work if the other four aren't met. The fifth goal, creating a medieval experience, reinforces what we do in the SCA. The SCA event day is about the Middle Ages and so the feast should enhance that experience.

Some Ideas

I give here some ideas to try. These ideas won't fit feasts at all events. Even if you could get every historical detail right, the Middle Ages was not uniform, so the perfect Italian Renaissance feast would be out of place at a Viking-era Norse event.

1. Choose Recipes that Don't Include Non-Medieval Foods

Some common foods didn't occur in Europe in the Middle Ages, for example, tea, pineapple, marshmallows, grapefruit, soy products, milk chocolate, pecans, soda pop. Other familiar foods were available only at the very end of the Middle Ages, for example, potatoes, coffee, hot peppers, chocolate, vanilla, green beans, tomatoes, and peanuts. (Smartt and Simmonds, 1995, Kiple and Ornelas 2000). To enhance the medieval feel, avoid foods not common in medieval Europe.

2. Serve Foods in Medieval Shapes

Pictures from the Middle Ages show round or oval loaves of bread and birds and fish served whole. If you have access to those, presenting them to the diners will feel more authentic than serving square loaves and butchers' cuts. See photo gallery on Gode Cookery website.

3. Include Preserved Foods

During much of the year medieval people relied on preserved foods. Canning and freezing have revolutionized food storage, but were developed well after the Middle Ages. In Period, foods were dried, pickled, salted, smoked, or stored in honey. From harvest in the fall until the first spring greens could be gathered, most of the available foods had been preserved by one of these methods

(Wilson 1991, Hagan 1995, 1998, Dawson 1996). To evoke this part of their experience, serve preserved foods such as pea soup (from dried peas), pickles (pickled cucumbers), salted meats, smoked fish, or honeyed fruits. Most collections of medieval recipes include some using preserved foods.

4. Use Medieval Drinks or Less Modern Ones.

Medieval people drank a variety of beverages but most were different from our usual drinks. Alcoholic beverages such as beer, ale, wine, mead, ciders and perry (pear cider), feature prominently because they protect from contaminated water. Non alcoholic options are sekanjeban (a sweetened vinegar-based drink, see recipe in Cariadoc's Miscellany) and juleps (flavored syrups). Both are made as concentrates that can be diluted when used.

Citrus fruits grew in southern Europe but our modern ones appear in Europe slowly during the Middle Ages. Sour oranges are first reported in the 11th century, lemons in the 12th century, limes in the 13th century, sweet oranges in the 15th century, probably mostly around the Mediterranean (Smartt and Simmonds, 1995).

What we call "herbal teas", from mint or chamomile, were available. The term "tea" comes from the tea plant of Asia, which was first encountered by Europeans about 1514 and is the English version of the Dutch word for the Malay word for the Chinese name "cha". (Webster's Dictionary, Kiple and Ornelas 2000). They probably called the herbal teas "infusions" or "decoctions." Milk production was less than at the present and milk was difficult to preserve but when available milk was drunk (Wilson 1991). And they certainly drank water, though they probably were careful about where it came.

5. Cook and Garnish with Flowers.

Medieval food was often shades of beige and brown. To make it more interesting, flowers were added when they were available (or if dried). Roses, violets, calendulas (pot marigolds), the flowers of borage, mint, sage, oregano, and lavender cabbage flowers, nasturiums and watercress were used. Include these in the SCA feasts. It helps to add them at the end so the color isn't lost in cooking.

Flowers should only be served if you know they are safe to eat. Flowers from florists are NOT safe to eat. And, be careful what else you garnish with if you are including edible flowers because diners will assume if it's on the plate it's edible, and many flowers are not. (Newdick and Lawrence 1991, deLanvallei website)

6. Serve Fish and Shellfish.

Much of Europe is coastal. Fish were important in their diets. There are many ways to include fish. One is as a fish course with say, poached salmon with in green sauce or boiled shellfish with herbs. Another is as an appetizer. Or serve a series of small portions, for example of sardines, kippered herring or smoked oysters. Medieval cookbooks are full of authentic fish recipes.

7. Make Illusion Foods

(*soteltes*, subtleties). Late period grand meals featured all kinds of illusion foods and dramatic center pieces. Some were edible, others just decorative. You can build castles or coats of arms of sugar paste or marzipan, or decorate the top of a pie with figures of fighters. (Wilson 1991)

8. Make the Meal Time and Place Specific.

We frequently do this, but it bears repeating. Evoke a particular place by developing a meal they could have enjoyed. For this taking all the recipes from a cookbook from the era is both easy and sensible. Readily available medieval cookbooks include: *To the King's Taste* – 14th C England, *Viandier de Taillevent* – 14th C France, Platina – Italy 15th C, Sabina Welserin 16th C. Germany, and deNola - 15th C. Naples, for example. For general information online see the Gode Cookery website, Cariadoc's Miscellany and Cindy Renfrow's webpage (url's in References, below).

9. Try Medieval Seating.

Individual chairs set at tables for four were rare in the Middle Ages. There's a lot of variations that make the seating more medieval. In Roman feasts the men lounged and the women sat on chairs, customs which must have lingered well after the formal fall of Rome.Early Scandinavian feasts seem to have seated the diners on both sides of a long wooden table, or they sat with their feet in the dugout part of the longhouse. Tables of the 11th – 14th C were mainly in a U shape, with people sitting on one side only, the lords at the center of the "U". Except for the lord, who might have had a chair, most people in early and middle period feasts shared benches (Sass 1975). Later Medieval feasts are the ones frequently shown in illuminations: imitate an illumination. In the Middle East, feasters sat on the floor on cushions and women rarely ate with men.

10. Encourage Medieval Eating Styles.

Until the 16th C, forks were not used individually. They were first introduced to pick up pasta or for suckets (sweet items in honey). In most places, a spoon was put at each place and people ate with that and their own sharp knife. Eating with knife, spoon, and fingers is a challenge, but can be great fun. Cooks should consider, when preparing the meal, what dinnerware the diners have. Soupy, stewy foods work well with spoon and knife. Long pieces, for example, of asparagus, are much more difficult. Since this can be messy, add the medieval detail of hand washing bowls. Frequent hand washing accompanied forkless eating and many nice recipes for scented hand wash exist (Sass 1975, Dawson 1996).

Conclusion

Variations add fun. Perhaps try a single innovation at the next feast. It shouldn't be dull routine for the cooks. Feasts and cooking are opportunities to learn about the Middle Ages, and in the SCA tradition, try the things we read about.

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(The books quoted are in my possession so Unser Hafen cooks are welcome to borrow them.)

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A Blending of the Past and Present

by THLord Stefan li Rous Ansteorra
email: stefan at florilegium.org

Over the past twenty years in an ongoing effort, I have been collecting bits of useful information from various newsgroups, mail lists and articles submitted to me by their authors. In order to make this information available to others, I have placed this information in a collection of files I call Stefan's Florilegium. The Florilegium is on the web at: http://www.florilegium.org

I am always interested in new articles. If you have written an article that would be of interest to others in the SCA, please send it to me for possible inclusion in the Florilegium. A&S documentation and class handouts will also often work out well. I am especially interested in A&S papers.

Advertisements on the site pay for its upkeep. If you enjoy the Florilegium, please click on an ad or two each time you are there.

Here are the new files for this month:
In the ACCESSORIES section:

- Rubies-Spphrs-art "Rubies and Sapphires" by Lady Rutilia Fausta.
- Viking-Beads-art "Viking Beads" by Lady Sileas ni Dhomhnaill of Goldenoak.

In the CLOTHING section:

- merch-shoes-msg Lists and reviews of period-style shoe makers.

In the COMBAT-RAPIER section:

- rapier-armor-msg Construction of armor for rapier combat.

In the CRAFTS section:

- LMM-Repousse-art "Leather Mallet Medallion, Repoussé" by Lady Ingeborg bildsbriótr Ulfsdottir.
  In the EQUESTRIAN section:
- Women-Riding-art "Women Riding in Medieval Times – Practical Experiences" by Lady Isabell Winter.

In the FOOD section:

- crockpot-dshs-msg Medieval dishes which cook well in a slow-cooker/crockpot.
- DYKIP-Brekfst-art "Did You Know it's Period? Part 7: Time for Breakfast" by HL Rowan Houndskeeper.

In the SCA-CAMPING section:

- cmp-ckng-bags-art Camp cooking using boil-in bags for quick meals by Baroness Claire Shayhan.
- In the TEXTILE-ARTS section: oilcloth-msg Period oiled or waxed, waterproof cloth.

- Here are the updated files for this month:
  fd-France-msg Food of medieval France.
- References.gingerbread-msg Medieval gingerbread. Recipes.
- gums-resins-msg Period use of plant gums and resins. Myrrh,mastic, frankincense, camphor.
- hais-msg A medieval, Middle East sweet made of dates,bread crumbs, ground nuts, and sugar.
- kitchen-clean-msg Cleaning the kitchen after an SCA event.
- London-msg Medieval points of interest in and around London.
- macrame-msg Period macrame. References.
- olives-msg Period olives. Processing fresh olives.
- pewter-msg Pewter in period. References. Sources.
- raingear-msg Period raingear. waterproofing cloth.
- root-veg-msg Medieval and period root vegetables.
- SCA-gays-msg Acceptance of Gays and Lesbians in the SCA.
- SCA-transport-msg Typical and unusual SCA vehicles and transportation.
- shields-msg SCA and period shields.
- snow-msg "Snow", a white, creamy confection often served with wafers.

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[1]

Dreams in the Medieval Garden

by THL EllaAnne

People in the Middle Ages were very aware and appreciative of the trials and tribulations brought by the changing seasons. References to the weather and seasons appear in many manuscripts and books of hours. Here is a rhyme from a later 15th century manuscript, currently in the Bodleian Library:

January:	By this fire I warm my hands
February:	And with my spade I delve my lands.
March:	Here I set my things to spring,
April:	And here I hear the birds sing.
May:	I am light as bird on bough,
June:	And I weed my corn well now.
July:	With my scythe my mead I mow,
August:	And here I shear my corn full low.
September	Wil my flail I earn my bread,
October	And here I sow my sheaf so red.
November	At Martinmas I kill my swine,
December	And at Christmas I drink red wine[2].

[1] From Wikimedia Commons. This media file is in the public domain in the United States.

[2] Collins, Marie and Davis, Virginia. A Medieval Book of Seasons.NYC: Harper Collins. Page29.

The Bardic Circle: Enjoying and Participating in an SCA Tradition

By Lady Colla Cunocroi

It can be intimidating. Terrifying. Boring if you go with the wrong mindset. Or just plain fun. This is the bardic circle. Let me tell you about it.

There are several types of bardic events; a competition, a circle, an open circle and an after bardic. In competitions, rules, dates and times are announced before hand, including the type of pieces required. A bardic circle is a less formal gathering, often held at overnight events and wars, which starts about dusk. Once the kiddies are put to bed around 11 or so, the circle is often 'opened' and becomes the even less formal-and less polite-open circle, where *anything* can and will be performed. You've been warned. An after bardic is basically what's left of an open bardic deep into the night, consisting of anyone crazy enough to still be awake and a bottle of something to keep of the cold.

Have you been to the bardics? If you have, you probably hold warm memories of all these events. But if you've missed them up till now, here's what I'd recommend.

Enjoying

If you want to attend a bardic but don't wish to perform, try a competition. Here you'll see the finest pieces that the bards have to offer. Sit back, relax, and enjoy the competition for what it is. First, stop listening for perfect musical quality. I know some of you will raise your eyebrows at this, but bear with me: this is the

SCA, not American Idol. In period, bardic work was meant to share legends, information and history in an entertaining manner. The content is what you are listening for, not the performer's pitch. Quality is important, but don't complain because the performers don't sound like your radio. Their work is to tell their story in words or song. Your job is to listen to it.

You will enjoy the bard's work more if you pay close attention. Unless the competition is during feast, it is rude to start side conversations, eat your dinner, start playing a drum or spend the time scolding your children (but I've seen them all done). Not only do you miss out, but you distract the performer. Just relax and enjoy the show.

If you liked that, try a bardic circle. You'll get a few mediocre performances in with the good, but you'll also get more variety in a relaxed atmosphere. And if you stick around until the open bardic, I promise you some of the bawdiest songs you'll ever hear, songs so funny that you'll almost fall off your chair laughing. Give it a try!

Performing

If you want to try performing, it's best to begin in bardic circles. This allows you to learn and improve without the mind numbing terror of COMPETITION hanging over you.

Before the Event

There are a few things to do before you enter your first Circle. First off, know your pieces. I'd recommend that, about a month before the event, you find four pieces you like; three songs and a story for starters, although four songs would be just fine. Look through your local library, folk-music websites, the resources at the end of this article and online story databases to find something you'd feel good sharing. And then, *practice them.* Too many new bards arrive at the circle having sung their song once or twice, or never at all. Then when the real crunch comes, they, of course, get tongue-tied. You have to know your pieces so well that you can sing them even when your legs are shaking and your heart is beating like a rabbit's because, believe me, that's how you'll feel when you perform for the first time. The best thing to do is to rehearse your song for weeks before you'll perform it. Sing in the shower, while you're walking, any time, or set aside practice time every week. When you sing, stand straight and sing with the kind of volume you want to use at the circle, because if you practice quietly you'll sing quietly. Tell your story to your reflection until you can look yourself in the eye the entire time.

At the Event

Once you've arrived, check your schedule; bardic circles are usually on time. If the war is a large one like Pennsic or Estrella, I'd recommend scouting out the location during the day. I've missed bardic circles before because I could'nt find them in the dark.

The Circle

Okay, take a deep breath. Go up and take a seat by the fire. Here's a few tips:

Follow the Rules

A circle is run in one of two ways. Either a person who has a piece to perform stands up and does it whenever inspiration hits, or everyone is given a turn as you go around the circle. Watch to find out which rule prevails, and don't be afraid to stand up if it's a free-for-all.

Follow the Leader

Go with the mood of the Circle. If everybody's singing battle songs, don't sing 'Under the Shield Wall'. Choose a lament. If most people are sitting while they perform, go ahead and do the same.

Follow Basic Etiquette

What I mean to say is: be polite. It's fine to double-check your written piece occasionally, but be attentive to the person performing. Avoid chatting or muttering your piece to yourself while somebody else performs. If it would annoy you, it probably annoys the performer.

Take Care of Yourself

The throat is a fragile thing, and should be treated kindly. Drink lemonade and hot tea while you're performing. And if you've been up all night and want to go again tomorrow night, take a nap during the day.

Never Give Up, Never Back Down

This is the most important piece of advice I can give: When you're performing, **never give up and never, ever back down.** If you mess up, *keep going*. Everybody makes mistakes in their piece once in a while. It happens. In fact it happens so often and to so many fine bards that there's even a word for it; bard-fart. And it's not the end of the world. The only real mistake is to panic and stop in the middle of a piece. If you forget a song verse, skip to the chorus. If you mess up the words, just keep going. You don't need to apologize. Nobody is going to judge you in a circle; they've all done it too and they know it. They'll applaud you all the more for sticking with it.

So now I've told you what I can. Go, find a seat by the fire and share your tales.

Kin of the Wave: The Selkie's Place in Myth and Morality

By Lady Colla Cunocroi

There is a place at the edge of the world...

On the edges of Scotland and Ireland, on the edge of the world where the land meets the sea, there are stories told. Stories about seals. It's said that there are seals, and there are those in seal skins, and looking at their great, dark eyes there is no way to tell between the two, so it's best to be respectful all the same. You never know which sleek head might be a selkie.

Selkie is the name they're called in the Orkney Isles, a name that simply means 'seal'. On the Irish coast they're called Ronan Sidhe (ronan shee), and also Kin of the Waves; men and women who change shape by slipping in and out of their shining seal skins. These are lovely and alluring folk, with dark hair and eyes. Selkie men are charming, and selkie women lovely enough to make a man instantly smitten. They are friendly to humans on the whole, and it's said by some Scottish clans that they are descended from a Selkie parent; they prove their claim by showing the webs between their young children's fingers and their dark shining eyes.

It's said that a selkie cannot resist coming to dance on the shore occasionally, and that if a human steals their shining sealskin and hide it away, the selkie would be stranded on land and would go willingly with their captor to be wedded. But the thing you must remember about selkies is that they belong to the sea, however much they may look like a human at the moment.

Stories are used to teach. Many stories are told concerning the meeting of men and selkies, each with a moral lesson. This story is told by the Clan MacCodrum of Scotland.

*

Long ago there lived a fisherman called Neil MacCodrum. Now Neil was a quiet sort of a man, and preferred his own company. At town parties he was always off to one side, a little apart. He pulled his own nets and readied his own creels

One spring evening, the men of the clachan were bringing their boats full of herring into shore. They swung homeward with glad hearts, and their wives lit the rushlights, so that the wide world dwindled to a warm quiet room.

Neil MacCodrum was the last to drag his boat up the shingle and hoist the creel of fish upon his back. He stood a while watching the seabirds fly low towards the headland, their wings dark against the evening sky, then turned to trudge up the shingle to his quiet croft on the machair.

It was as he turned he saw something move in the shadows of the rocks. A glimmer of white and high laughter like silver. He set down the creel, and with careful steps he neared the

rocks, hardly daring to breathe, and hid behind the largest one. And then he saw them - seven girls with long flowing hair, naked and white as the swans on the lake, dancing in a ring where the shoreline met the sea.

And now his eye caught something else - a shapeless pile of speckled brown skins lying heaped like seaweed on a boulder nearby. Now Neil knew. These were selkie girls.

Crouching low, Neil MacCodrum crept towards the pile of skins and slowly slid the top one down. But just as he rolled it up and put it under his coat, one of the selkie gave a sharp cry. The dance stopped, the bright circle broke, and the girls ran to the boulder, slipped into their skins and slithered into the rising tide, shiny brown seals that glided away into the dark night sea.

All but one.

She stood before him white as a pearl, as still as frost in starlight. She stared at him with great dark eyes that held the depths of the sea, then slowly she held out her hand, and said in a voice that trembled with silver:

"Please... give me back my skin."

He took a step towards her.

"Come with me," he said, "I will give you new clothes to wear."

The wedding of Neil MacCodrum and the selkie woman was set for the time of the waxing moon and the flowing tide. All the folk of the clachan came, six whole sheep were roasted and the whiskey ran like water. Toasts overflowed from every cup for the new bride and groom, who sat at the head of the table: Niel, beaming and awkward, unused to being the center of things, and the woman sitting quietly beside him at the bride-seat.

In time she bore him two children, a boy and a girl, who had the sandy hair of their father, but the great dark eyes of their mother, and there were little webs between their fingers and toes. Each day, when Neil was out in his boat, she and her children would wander along the machair to gather limpets or fill their creels with carrageen from the rocks at low tide. She seemed settled enough in the croft on the shore, and in May-time when the air was scented with thyme and roseroot and the children ran towards her, their arms full of wild yellow irises, she was happy.

But when the west wind brought rain, and strong squalls of wind that whistled through the cracks in the croft walls, she sat at the spinning-wheel, and would hum a strange song as the fine thread streamed through her fingers. MacCodrum hated these times and would sit in the dark peat-corner glowering at her over his pipe, but unable to say a word.

Thirteen summers had passed since the selkie woman came to live with MacCodrum, and the children were almost grown. As she knelt on the warm earth one afternoon, digging up silverweed roots to roast for supper, the voice of her daughter Morag rang clear and excited through the salt-pure air and soon the girl was beside her.

"O mother! Why does Father hide a leather coat in the barley kist?"

Her mother rose slowly to her feet, and in silence ran to the kist. She found the bundle and put her hand along the speckled brown skin.. She held it to her breast, put her other arm around her daughter, hugged her tightly. Once inside, she called her son Donald to her, and spoke gently to her children:

"I will soon be leaving you, mo chridhe, and you will not see me again in the shape I am in now. I go not because I do not love you, but because I must become myself again."

That night, the selkie woman rose, leaving the warm bed and slumbering husband. She walked alone to the silent shore and took off her clothes, one by one, and let them fall to the sand. Then she stepped lightly over the rocks and unrolled the speckled brown parcel she carried with her, and held it up before her. For one moment maybe she hesitated, her head turning back to the dark, sleeping croft on the machair; the next, she wrapped the shining skin about her and dropped into the singing water of the sea.

In the croft on the machair, Neil MacCodrum stirred, and felt for his wife, but his hand encountered a cold and empty hollow. He knew better than to look for her and he also knew she would never come to him again. But when the moon was young and the tide waxing, his children would not sleep at night, but ran down to the sands on silent webbed feet. There, by the rocks on the shoreline, they waited until she came - a speckled brown seal with great dark eyes. Laughing and calling her name, they splashed into the foaming water and swam with her until the break of day.

Those children, and their children's children, passed down the blood of the selkie. And that is why Clan MacCandroum has the best fishermen in Scotland. And that is why the people of Clan MacCandroum are always true to themselves.

*

In some tales the wife lives with her husband until he dies, or takes him with her and gives him the power of transformation, proving that love can change even your nature. In other tales the selkie woman finds freedom with her skin and her return to the ocean, and these tales remind us that we cannot give up who we are for the sake of safety and contentment. Above all, the selkie will always return to the sea. You must be true to your own nature.

Stories of the seal people also remind the listeners to respect the sea and its people. If a man kills a selkie, the sea will turn against him and he will be drowned. If a selkie cries in grief, there will be a storm. There are stories that the Spanish sailors killed and roasted the seals who swam up to the ships of their great Armada, and so were caught by the storm that destroyed them. You don't disrespect the sea and live long to tell of it.

Perhaps we should listen to the selkie stories again. People in our world give up passions for safety, and far too many disrespect the world in which they live. Maybe it's time to remember what the Selkies have told us.

What you should know before your first camping event

--or how to make your next camping event more comfortable than the last!--

Part II of III

By LadyNest Verch Gryffry and Lord Garin Valant de Gent, © 2010

This series of articles for the Tosspot is written with the goal of helping our barony and friends prepare for SCA camping events including Battlemoor in July and A Glimpse of Valhalla in August.

The series includes mundanely inspired tips and tricks that help make our SCA camping experience more enjoyable. For those that would rather live life in camp the way it really was, these articles will not provide a great deal of information for you, as they are not research articles about period life. However, if you are excited about SCA camping events, but have only minimal prior wilderness camping experience, you will hopefully find a few tidbits of information that can help you prepare.

This second article in this Series begins with the basics of "Outdoor Camping Survival Tips" along with a second section on Clothing pointers. The first article which skimmed over Shelter and Bedding basics was in the December 2009 edition of Tosspot. The final article will discuss period cooking and camp life.

With SCA camping we have two challenges. First is staying overnight in the wilderness without solid walls, without easy access to running water, and without many other comforts of home. Second is doing all of that while trying to dress, act, play, and do what a person from the middle ages would have done.

One reason why camping and the SCA tie nicely together is that the first challenge listed above already helps to set the tone for an authentic middle ages experience, as it was rare indeed to find a place and location that had anything approaching plumbing (oh, those clever Romans though), and many of our modern home comforts were also only something to dream about.

SCA Outdoor Camping Survival Basics

This article discusses outdoor survival basics that we should all know and keep in mind, especially when being active or camping at high altitude. Since Outlands climate is relatively harsh in general, many of the tips listed below apply to all active play out of doors, including general fighter practices and events. However, these concerns are even more important to keep in mind when you find yourself in more remote areas or when you are spending multiple days in a row outside, such as at a camping event.

SUN – Although lifegiving, the sun in the mountains can be stronger in impact and more likely to cause sunburn, dehydration, and overheating. You can even sunburn through overcast skies. Since you will likely be outside more than usual at a camping event, you must be vigilant in protecting yourself from the harsh effects of the sun. Those of us who come from Northern and Central European stock have very fair skin that is not adapted to Colorado sun. Therefore we must use artificial means to protect ourselves. Here are some must-do tips to help:

1) Shade - Stay in the shade as much as possible. Bring a shade shelter to put out in front of your tent, and stay under the trees. The sun will also sap your strength and dehydrate you faster, so staying in the shade is best all around when possible. If you are fighting or doing activities in the sun, take frequent

breaks and move into a shady area (and drink fluids – see below!)

2) Use Sun block –Higher elevations put you at more risk due to higher levels of the ultraviolet light. Choose a sunblock with a high SPF. The mountains are not the place to use lower SPF blocks. Put sunblock on first thing in the morning right after washing up (so that you don't forget!), then reapply at lunch and midday at the minimum. I have found that having some of those stick sunblocks are handy, as they can go in my pouch and are then easy to pull out no matter where I'm at and reapply.
   This is doubly important for children. Children with fair skin are more susceptible to sunburn and it is our duty as parents to constantly reapply the sunblock. A spray version along with a stick go a long way at SCA events. Just reapply anytime you think about it, and at least every few hours. Also note that if you start in the morning with layers and then remove a layer that then exposes a new neckline, don't forget to apply sunblock immediately to the newly exposed skin. Also watch for clothing that slips around, apply sunblock to all areas that might be exposed.
3) Cover your head – A broad brimmed hat is best. At night, a hat is also necessary, but that is to keep the warmth in your body. Straw hats are light weight and you can find ones that do not look too obviously non-period. For women, a scarf over your head was custom for many different places and times in the middle ages. A scarf is a great invention, and if you wear both a brimmed hat and a scarf, you'll protect your face even better. Placing a wet scarf or veil on top of your head can help cool you down as well.
4) Cover up most of your skin. If it's hot, this may seem counter-intuitive. However, we must take the lesson from those cultures that developed in hot places like the Arabian desserts – they wear long sleeved lightweight clothing. Long open, airy clothes work great. Watch those places that are exposed though, such as necklines, especially if you have fair skin.
5) Wear light colors – Light colors reflect more light, and will help keep you cooler.

THIRST– Never underestimate dehydration! Dehydration and related overheating issues can be major concerns, especially for fighters and fencers who are wearing extra heavy clothing and sweating away their body fluids. If you feel thirsty, that means you are becoming dehydrated. Thirst is your body's signal to stop and drink. Therefore, don't wait until you feel thirsty. Keep plenty of good quality fluids (ahh, that's non-alcoholic!) nearby at all times, and get in the habit of constantly drinking. Note, the best determination of whether you are drinking enough is not measured by how much fluid you consume, it's measured by how much your body expels. If you realize you haven't needed to use the portajohn in over 4 to 6 hours, you're probably not drinking enough. Other signs of dehydration are as follows:

- Your mouth and lips feels dry.
- You get a head ache.
- Your eyes feel dry and irritated.
- Your urine is dark and strong.

What to drink – all fluids are helpful in preventing dehydration. If you are sweating a lot due to strenuous activity, then fluids with electrolytes (i.e. salts and other minerals) are what you need most, otherwise you can end up with an electrolyte imbalance. Gatorade, Emergen-C, and Powerade are all examples. You can also add electrolytes to your other drinks of choice via packets. If you are not sweating a lot, regular water or other drinks that are not too highly

sugared or carbonated will all work just fine. General wisdom dictates that it is best not to rely solely on carbonated, sugared beverages (i.e. sodas or sugary juice drinks), nor alcoholic drinks, which actually can accentuate dehydration.

Overheating and heat illnesses - Heat exhaustion and the severe medical emergency condition called Hyperthermia (i.e. heat stroke), can be avoided by taking frequent breaks in the shade and drinking plenty of fluids with added electrolytes. If you start to feel shaky, stop immediately and ask for someone to help you cool off and get something to drink. Heat exhaustion is accompanied by symptoms including red face, sweating profusely, and perhaps some shakiness. Heat exhaustion is normally reversed by resting, cooling off, and drinking plenty of fluids. If you do not feel better within an hour, seek professional medical attention immediately.

Heat stroke is very serious, and should not be underestimated. As opposed to heat exhaustion, the person affected by heat stroke often feels dry rather than sweaty. This is because their body is running out of water and their internal temperature is rising. Nausea and dizziness and a incoherence can also follow. The skin will feel hot and dry to the touch (in heat exhaustion, there is still sweat – so dryness is one of the critical signs, if a person who should be sweating is not, it is very serious). The person should immediately be taken to a emergency medical facility or an ambulance should be called to have paramedic assistance, as IV's may be necessary to restore proper fluid balance. Give the person fluids to drink and help them cool off with cool, wet washcloths while they are transported to an emergency facility. This condition is life-threatening and should always be immediately treated seriously. Remember, it is better safe than sorry when it comes to whether emergency medical personnel should be called! Always notify the event autocrat immediately as well, but don't wait for an autocrat to decide when or whether to call an ambulance if someone is potentially suffering from heat stroke.

COLD – So, after you've managed to beat off the intense rays of the sun all day, avoiding sunburn, dehydration and heat exhaustion, it's now night. And now its cold. In fact it's getting really cold. Nighttime in the mountains can drop below freezing, even in the middle of the summer. So as a good camper you must be prepared with proper clothing. The more severe medical emergencies, such as hypothermia or frostbite, are less likely at SCA camping events, unless you are camping during marginal weather. However, it is important to be aware of the realities of hypothermia. A person may be at rish of hypothermia, even if the temperature is not below freezing, especially if they get wet (such as getting soaked by a storm) and remain exposed to the elements, such as wind and moderately cold temperatures. The opposite of hyperthermia, hypothermia is when your body temperature starts to drop. Pre-hypothermia starts with feeling cold, and then proceeds to shivering, and eventually reaches delirium. A person in hypothermia can start to think they feel hot, since their body temperature is dropping. To avoid hypothermia, don't fall in a creek or stand out in a rainstorm. Ok, beyond that, make sure to change into dry clothes if your clothes get wet, and warm up by a fire. Again, unless you are wandering around at night by yourself, this condition is not one we would expect to encounter at an SCA camping event. Instead, you'll mostly just be concerned with staying warm and comfortable in general.

To stay warm, wear layers of clothing, as spelled out below in the section specifically on clothing. Wool is a great insulator, so a good choice. If you can't afford a wool cloak, a nice warm blanket, especially one that is fleece or has a period look, is a good option at night. This is also the time to bring out those hoods or caps. As we

know, heat escapes through the head, so some kind of head covering is a must. Hoods are easy to make, and look very medieval, so a great choice. If you don't have one before embarking on an event, you can possibly borrow one from loaner garb. Warm socks are helpful as well, to keep heat from escaping through those toes.

CRITTERS -

Bugs - Bring bug repellent if you are sensitive or adverse to mosquitoes. Especially if it has been a wet season, mosquitoes are a likely. Ticks are also common in the Rocky Mountains. It's probably most important to use some sort of flea and tick repellent on your dogs (the Frontline style works well), since dogs are more likely to go scrounging under brush in areas where ticks may thrive. Covering your skin also helps to keep yourself protected. If you have dogs or children, checking them nightly for ticks is the best idea. Citronella candles are another great option for around the campsite to help repel flying insects. There are also natural pyrethrum-based repellents that work well and are gentler than DEET loaded repellents. However, DEET is very effective, it just has some less-desirable chemical components.

Bears– Luckily the black bears in the Rocky Mountains are not aggressive. However, some have become people food conditioned meaning that they look for food in campgrounds. A few safety tips will keep your food and your gear safe if you are in bear country:

- Double bag all trash and put in bear safe trash dumpsters if they are available in camp. Do not keep food trash including paperware used to eat food in camp. It must be double bagged and put either inside a locked trunk of a vehicle, a locked steel trailer, or bear safe dumpsters.
- Do not leave dirty dishes out over night. You must wash all dishes and then dump the dirty dish water FAR from camp, not in camp.
- Do not store ANY food in your tent. Including candy or gum. Also, some scented products such as lotions or soaps have been known to attract bears. If you are in an area with recent bear activity, put all scented products in a locked trunk, not in your tent.
- Store food in locking tubs and ice chests and place all of these tubs and ice chests inside locked trunks, utility type steel trailers, or campground designated food storage steel boxes if available. When you're backpacking you must hang food very high off the ground preferably between two trees on tether lines. Luckily SCA camping is not usually backpacking, so appropriate vehicles and trailers should be available.
- Don't leave the bag of marshmallows out on the table after that late night marshmallow roast. Trust me. I did it once, and mama bear came into camp and took our marshmallows. Then I didn't have marshmallows for the next night and helped to train the bear that campsites make great pickings.

CAMPING GARB

The trick to dressing appropriately for SCA camping is not unlike the standard rules for regular camping, it's just that certain modern fabrics just look silly and should be avoided at SCA events. Unfortunately some of the best modern advances in clothing have come in relation to sportswear, such as lightweight fabrics that breath while providing insulation. However, that doesn't mean that the medieval fabrics which were used for thousands of years don't still serve their purpose when utilized well.

The most important point to keep in mind when camping (either mundane or SCA "period") is that the temperatures in the mountains vary especially widely and conditions transition quickly. You must be prepared with clothing for very hot and dry, for wet and cold, for hot and wet, and for very cold and dry (think of the four humors!).

Here are some basic rules of thumb:

FABRICS -

Wool – This natural fabric can provide great warmth due to its insulating properties. Sheep obviously knew what they were doing when they perfected wool! Wool can be woven into various weights, and was used widely in period. A wool cloak or hood is perfect for cool evenings, and placing it over a wool overtunic or dress garment is even better for the deeper cold nights. Wool will also maintain some insulation even if it gets wet, so is a good choice for all outer layers.

Cotton/Fustian – Although rare until later in period, cotton was used in certain places and times in the middle ages. One of the main types of cotton fabrics utilized was fustian, a twill. Cotton is a great fabric for hot weather wear and is usually less expensive in the modern day than linen. Using traditional looking cotton twills is always a suitable choice.

Flax/Linen- Linen, which is made from flax fiber, is not only very period looking, it also is an exceptional fabric for wearing when the weather is hot. Avoid linen fabric blends that are blended with anything polyester or synthetic if possible. Polyester or blends with polyester are a poor choice for outdoor wear since they do not breath well and will feel hot. Layers of linen garments can be useful when it cools down, especially if you do not have access to wool garments. A linen under tunic or chemise for women is the perfect night ware for SCA events.

Silk – Fine silk fabrics can also make good hot weather wear, though it may be more difficult for a novice to work with.

Hemp/Canvas – Hemp is the base material used in real "canvas," although modern canvas is often made with cotton instead. Hemp canvas tends to be rougher than linens, but is a good choice for outerwear and can be used to make a great simple tunic for setup and tear down rather than using better garb. Hemp used to be a common fabric choice, however with its stigma relating to the fact that it is the same botanical plant used for producing marijuana, it is less utilized now except in some more industrial or non-clothing applications.

LAYERS

Dressing in layers is appropriate all day. You will want more layers at night when you add an outer layer such as a cloak or coat.

Under layers – Nothing is more period than wearing an under layer of plain linen. You can even use this underlayer as your night wear.

Middle layers – Your middle layer(s) will be your regular garb. A long tunic dress for women over a chemise works great. Men can wear a tunic over pants. What you wear will really depend on your persona. Loaner garb is also available for newcomers with few pieces of their own.

Outer layers – The outer layer will usually be a cloak, although some later personas have certain styles of coats that are period. If you can't come up with a cloak yet, then I found a rectangular blanket worked well for warmth, and kept me feeling like I was still dressing period, rather than resorting to modern jackets. However, I have found it

useful to bring one large plastic rain poncho for yourself, you know, just in case. When the rain REALLY starts coming down, if you need to go out and do some drainage work, or rescue your bow, it is a nice option to be able to pull a poncho on over your cloak. This will keep you cloak from getting soaked, so that when the rain stops you'll still have a somewhat dry cloak to wear that night.

Top of the head – A brimmed hat keeps the sun off during the day, and a warm cap gets the warmth in during the night. Even wearing a hat to bed can help you stay warm at night.

Feet – Bring lots of socks and change them at least once during the day. Wear good shoes. If you have a period pair of boots that look great, but don't really protect the feet from rocks, or don't quite fit right, don't be tempted to wear them all day. Instead bring a couple different pairs of boots or other shoes that fit well, and switch which pair you wear every day. By alternating shoes, you'll help avoid blisters.

10 quick tips for happy SCA camping-

1. Keep one set of street clothes, including long pants and sweater or sweatshirt in your vehicle along with one extra SCA garb (simple tunic will do in a pinch) in case all of your clothes in your tent get soaked due to a river running through your tent.
2. Store your clothing in a plastic tote or better yet for the more period feel in a well sealed chest. This will keep your clothing dry even if your tent caves in a storm or leaks.
3. Wet down a head scarf or washcloth to put over your head and/or face to help you cool down in the heat. Just make sure to reapply sunblock afterwards.
4. Wear boots rather than those really cute period looking sandals. Bring two pairs of boots, if possible, and switch the pair you wear daily. You will most likely be doing more walking than usual, and changing shoes helps your feet from getting blisters.
5. Keep a pair of slip on shoes in the tent for that very early morning or middle of the night run to the loo.
6. Bring lots of towels. You'll be surprised how many you'll go through.
7. Bring a big canvas bag to put your dirty clothes in.
8. Keep a bottle of water in the tent (this is the ONLY food-like item to keep in the tent). You'll probably wake up thirsty in the middle of the night, due to the drier humidity levels in the mountains and outdoors.
9. Pack a small hygiene kit: toothbrush, toothpaste, brush, water spray bottle, hand sanitizer, and lotion. However, keep these items in a double ziplock, or sealed wooden box. If there has been recent bear activity, you will need to put these items along with the food in a bear secured area, rather than in your tent at night.
10. Drink lots of water. Keep water with you at all times, and drink it. At high altitude this is a must, even if you aren't working hard.

Fire tips –

Smaller fires are more efficient than larger fires.

For the perfect fire, once its started, use wood of the same general type and size. It will then burn evenly and produce great warmth from the coals it forms for either cooking or just keeping you warm.

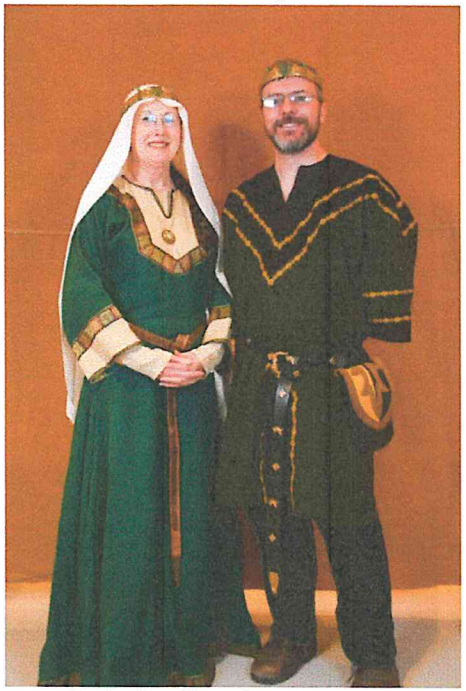
Hard woods burn slower, but soft woods are fine for fires. Just don't mix hard wood with soft wood in the same fire, other than using small kindling for starting the fire.

Fire starting tips – Although good fire starting takes practice to get the feel for the right mix of oxygen, fuel, and heat source, it is an enjoyable process if you take the time to understand some basic principles. I was taught the following method for starting a fire, that has worked well for me. There are other methods that also work.

- Start with a good mound of DRY material that includes:
  - Thatch, pine needles, newspaper
  - Very small, dry twigs
  - Small twigs about 12 inches in length.
- Create a tepee/conical shape with the 12 inch twigs. Put the VERY dry, thatch material in the middle.
- Light the dry material with a match, or other firestarter (flint & steel, anyone?).
- Blow gently on the fire to get the thatch going as it starts to run out, add more thatch.
- As the second bout of thatch is burning, add the very small twigs. If the thatch has enough heat and oxygen, the very small twigs should start to burn. Keep adding very small twigs and even more thatch (but don't smother any flames), along with gentle blowing if necessary. The trick is to get the fire hot enough to catch the slightly larger material on fire. You must find the right mix of fuel and air.
- When these small, very gently guided flames have enough umph, the 12 inch twigs will start burning and will fall into the fire, hopefully with some good little flames coming up.
- At that time start to add, gradually, the next sized fuel – perhaps some small sticks with 1-2 inch diameters.
- At each layer of adding fuel you must encourage the new wood to take flame and start burning. The key is using good quality DRY wood. Once you have a small fire, you should then add a good amount of the normal sized logs you are planning on burning, making sure to not smother any fire already burning.

Matches – matches may not be period, but even SCAers should keep plenty of matches around. Be sure to keep them in waterproof containers. Wet matches don't light so well. Those non-period Ziplocs are amazing. If you are going to try to use more period methods for fire starting – go for it. Just keep some matches in your car as a backup.

The Court of the Barony of Unser Hafen



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A&S Champion: THL EllaAnne de Kari

Pencerdd: Lady Perryn

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Activities, Gatherings, Practices & Guilds

Archery Practice:
Second and Fourth Sundays, 1-3 pm at Sir Kevin's. Contact Lord Uilliam MacMillan (970) 622-0132.

Sundays, 10-noon in the Canton of Bofharrach at the home of Sir Rand the Tracker, 12851 MCR 2, Wiggins, CO. Please call 970-483-6607 to confirm practice and for directions.

Artisan's Day – a monthly or bi-monthly gathering of artisans in the Barony. Coordinated by the A&S Chamption, THL EllaAnne de Kari. ellaanne@gmail.com

Blacksmithing & Bowyer's Guilds: Master Thorfinn Greybeard (970) 667-1284.

Bofharrach Populace: Every 4th Wednesday 7 pm at Rose Manor.

Brewer, Vintners & Cordial makers Guild – Master Thorfinn (970) 667-1284

Cantores Lupini Lady Rivkah (Jennie Mizrahi) (970) 622-9508

Chandler's Guild - Lord Uilliam MacMillan (Bill Colby) (970)622-0132 , colby0123 @ comcast.com

Equestrian Practice: Lady Wystl (720) 841-6565. See Website

Officer's Meeting: Third Thursday every month, 7-9 pm. Check website for location.

Populace Gathering: Second Thursday every month, 7-9 pm. Check website for location.

Unser Hafen Fighter and Fencing Practice: Sunday afternoons, 2-6 pm. Winter (through March) at the CSU Field House. Summer: City Park, Fort Collins.

The Worshipful Company of Leathercrafters - Lady Ava von Elba, jess8549 @ simla.colostate.edu